

Helicopters rescue group from tiny island retreat

MONA ISLAND. Puerto Rico (UPI) — Helicopters from the United States, Puerto Rico and Dominican Republic Saturday rescued some 100 people stranded for more than 24 hours on a tiny island 40 miles off the west coast of Puerto Rico.

Passengers and crew of the 340-foot A. Regina were forced to spend the night on an island marine reserve after the vessel ran aground on a reef near Mona Island at 1 a.m. Friday on a trip from the western city of Mayaguez to the Dominican Republic. There were no injuries.

Rescue efforts late Friday were postponed by darkness, and only half of the people were airlifted off the island. Food and blankets were shipped in by helicopter for the rest, who were forced to spend the night.

At dawn Saturday, eight helicopters from the Puerto Rican National Guard, the U.S. Army, the U.S. Coast Guard and the Dominican Air Force began transferring the passengers to Mayaguez — the third largest city in Puerto Rico. Civil Defense and Red Cross officials met the passengers as they arrived by helicopter.